

# Moving Toward Equity and Sustainability in Rural Energy: Putting Gender Concepts into Action

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## Introductions and Overview: Lisa Büttner

First, I would like acknowledge both the **quantity** and the **diversity** of participants that we have here today. When I look at the list of registered participants, I am thrilled and humbled.

I participated in the first Village Power workshop seven years ago, when we were just 32 energy wonks eagerly preaching to the choir (ourselves) about the merits and challenges of bringing renewable energy services to remote developing world communities. It is therefore particularly gratifying for me to see that the topic of **gender** and its relation to energy has alone attracted **three times** as many people!

As important as our numbers is who we are and what experience we bring to this gathering. The renewable energy community is finally breaking out beyond a core of people who believe that renewable and responsible use of energy must form part of any sustainable future.

We have recognized that we cannot be lone advocates, but must learn how to communicate and partner with other key development sectors within which energy needs are often implicit but not often prioritized. And we are recognizing that these energy needs are dominated by those of women, though we rarely employ the tools to make that determination in the field where we implement projects.

[[In my own case, I made a choice 15 years ago to pursue engineering as a way to ground my idealism and become--*as a woman*--the best advocate I could be for a cleaner, healthier planet. I missed the Flower Child generation, but it certainly had a powerful influence on me in 1973 when the inexhaustible energy of the sun seemed to my second-grade mind to be such an obvious answer to the gas lines and smog. Solar energy! That'll save the day. Along the way, however, I have learned that technology is far from the whole picture. A healthy planet depends on people, on communities, and on those who understand them.]]

Working in cross-sectoral partnership, we stand the best chances of riding on wheels already invented for determining the needs of rural women, men and children, and of shaping our policies and methodologies to ensure that energy services reach those who most need them.

### **Who are we here today?**

Among us here are representatives of:

- Government agencies

- RE industry

- Foundations

- Local NGOs, International NGOs

- MDBs

- RE experts

- Development experts: Health, Water, Transport, Agriculture, Women's leadership, Gender analysis

We are multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary;

We come from South, Central and North America, from Africa, from Asia and Europe;

We have access to local knowledge and ingenuity, and we have access to multilateral resources;

We are less young, and more young;

We are women, and men;

And we share a common belief:

*women, as well as men, are important catalysts of change, and sustainable energy is a tool for aiding in that change.*

We have the potential and the tools we need to take this belief and catalyzing change.